

INSIDE TRACKS

CELEBRATE MONTANA'S HUNTING HERITAGE WEEK—SEPTEMBER 19-25

Deer Project Increases Hunter Opportunity

There's good news for hunters. In certain areas FWP can issue more doe tags and still maintain the deer population.

A white-tailed deer project being conducted in the Tally Lake and Fortine ranger districts northwest of Kalispell has included studying the effects of increasing the doe harvest by issuing more tags to hunters. This increased hunter opportunity and harvest apparently has not harmed the deer population, according to FWP Biologist John Morgan.

"The first three years of the project (1988-1990) we didn't issue B-Tags," said Morgan. "Then in Hunting District 102, we issued 600 B-tags during 1991, and increased that to 700 in 1992 and 1993. So far it looks like we can allow the additional harvest and still maintain the population."

According to Morgan, this long-

term project is being conducted to learn more about deer populations in denser, coniferous forest areas in the northwest part of the state. "Most studies have focused on other habitat types," he said. "We are looking at the way deer use areas where there is timber harvest as well as estimating populations in dense forests, and the effect of deer harvest on populations in these kinds of habitats." Morgan added that results of the project will be used by the Forest Service to design timber sales while considering the needs of deer.

Morgan, volunteer Leonard Howke, and others have marked more than 800 deer with radio-collars and neckbands during the project so that the deer can be located and their habits noted. Some of these deer were captured and marked during the summer, an unusual strategy but one that

Morgan sees as beneficial. "You can trap all you want on winter range but you can't be sure where those deer will spend the summer and fall," he said. "By trapping on summer range, you can focus your efforts by marking deer in specific drainages."

Morgan credits Howke with making the trapping efforts possible. Howke, who is a Pepsi-guzzling lead hunter education instructor in the Whitefish area, has been involved in the project since 1990. His knowledge of the project area has proved invaluable.

"I do it for the enjoyment and the knowledge I can pass along to kids in the hunter education classes," said Howke. "Education will improve hunting attitudes and in the long run be good for everyone."

Results of the project so far indicate (continued on Page 4)

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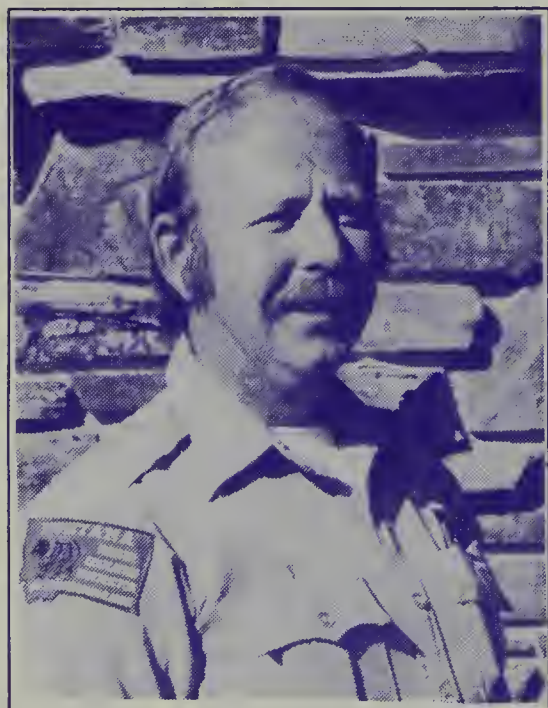


TAGGED FOR STUDY. Biologist John Morgan and volunteer Leonard Howke take measurements and attach a radio-collar to a white-tailed doe on the

project area northwest of Kalispell. The project has resulted in more doe tags being issued in the area while maintaining deer population.

New Lead Hunter Education Instructors Named

Now is the time to celebrate hunting through Montana's Hunting Heritage Week (September 19-25) and National Hunting and Fishing Day (September 25). Perhaps the best way to celebrate is to thank your local hunter education instructors for the efforts they contribute to maintaining our hunting heritage. In particular, the area lead instructors assume a large job of organizing classes and making sure they run smoothly.



PARENT/STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY will be the emphasis of Dan Atkinson, new lead hunter education instructor for the Kalispell area.

Four new lead instructors have been named for the Region One Hunter Education Program. Don Flesvig of Plains has assumed the Sanders County lead bowhunter education instructor duties, and Dan Atkinson of Lakeside is now the lead instructor for hunter education in the Kalispell area. Dennis Kelleher has taken on the lead instructor duties for hunter education in the Bigfork area, and Ray Aylesworth is the new Lake County chief hunter education instructor.

Flesvig has been one of the Region's most active instructors. In 1993, he taught several courses in Sanders County, one course in Mineral County

and actively recruited new instructors. He also served on a committee to examine ways of increasing the emphasis on hunter ethics in the program.

"I'm involved in this program because I love hunting, bowhunting, and I'm concerned about the future of the sport," said Flesvig. "I emphasize to students that there is no shortcut to becoming a good bowhunter. You must know your equipment, practice extensively and make sure you have a perfect shot before you release the arrow. Bowhunters have to realize that they are the ambassadors for the sport."

Atkinson has been an active member of the Kalispell team of hunter

"If we want to maintain our hunting heritage, we must educate everyone, not just the hunter."

education instructors; he assumed the lead position with an aim to expand the field portion of the instruction and to emphasize instructor organization, recruitment and training as well as parent participation.

"I believe it's important for parents to participate in the program," said Atkinson, who is also a PTA leader. "If the parents take an active part and discuss hunter ethics, for example, with their kids, the kids are much more likely to put what they learn into practice." Atkinson added that the responsibility students learn in hunter education can be carried into other parts of their lives.

Kelleher will emphasize parent and community involvement, communication and ethics in the Bigfork area. Kelleher and his wife, Paulette, team-teach and feel it's important to build community support for the program. They also have been successful in including the Eddie the Eagle gun safety program for kids in the Bigfork School System.

"With the number of people moving into this area of Montana, it's abso-




THE BOWHUNTER'S BOWHUNTER. Don Flesvig of Plains has assumed the lead bowhunter instructor duties for Sanders County.

lutely critical that we emphasize hunter education and communication with all members of the community," said Kelleher. "If we want to maintain our hunting heritage, we must educate everyone, not just the hunter."

Ray Aylesworth is the new Lake County chief hunter education instructor. He will emphasize developing a field course for the courses around the area. "The field course is the key area we need to move forward on," said Aylesworth. He said, "We need to emphasize live firing."

Aylesworth also plans eventually to organize an adult hunter education class. "Clearly there's a need for an adult course. New people are moving into the area all the time, and many Montanans decide later in life to begin hunting," he said.

He added that educating new hunters of any age is important in maintaining a positive image for all hunters. 



Hunters: Keep Regulations In Mind

Most hunters obey all hunting regulations, but some common mistakes are made every year, according to Region One Warden Captain Ed Kelly.

"Everyone can benefit from a quick review of the first few pages of the Montana Big Game Hunting Regulations," said Kelly. "The three most common violations are failure to properly tag an animal, not stopping at check stations, and trespass. These mistakes are all avoidable."

Kelly noted that careful thought and planning is the key. "Many hunters are excited when they harvest an animal, and they may forget to cut out the proper date on the proper tag; some hunters forget their tags. Think ahead and you won't make these mistakes."

Kelly also reminded hunters to review regulations on hunter orange, waste of game, hunting hours and shooting near roads. "A little preparation can make the difference between a positive hunting experience and a negative one," he said. "We want all of the experiences to be positive, and there's no reason why they can't be."

Hunting Highlights

According to the most recent nationwide survey conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, hunters spent \$12.3 billion pursuing their sport in 1991. This contribution increases as it passes through the economy.

Other highlights:

- 14.1 million people (7.4 percent of all U.S. residents 16 years of age and older) hunted 236 million days in 1991; participation was highest in the west and central parts of the country and lowest on the east and west coasts;
- A total of 109 million people participated in some form of wildlife-related recreation;
- The number of hunters increased 3 percent from a 1985 survey;
- Expenditures by hunters and anglers together totaled \$40.9 billion; most hunters also fished. 🐾

Volunteer Teaches Kids Wildlife ABC's

School groups visiting the Region One headquarters are often treated to a free-wheeling, hands-on, role-playing wildlife presentation by volunteer Heather Pier. Pier, who attends Flathead Valley Community College and is studying for a career in wildlife or environmental education, enjoys passing on her interest in wildlife to kids.

"I'm amazed at how much these kids know about wildlife," said Pier. "That's encouraging, because these kids are our future; they are the key."

So far this year, she has given more than a dozen programs to a total of nearly 300 kids ranging from preschoolers to high school students.

Pier, a hunter and shooting enthusiast, also participates in the hunter education program and assists in wildlife rehabilitation efforts. 🐾



Youth Employment Program Benefits State Parks

If you have visited state parks recently in northwest Montana, chances are you've noticed improvements made by kids through the Youth Summer Employment Program.

The program is a cooperative effort between Northwest Montana Human Resources and the FWP Parks Division in Region One. Through the program, youths are employed on a work crew and gain experience in responsibility and collecting a paycheck. According to Doug Good, a local educator and the coordinator for the crew working state parks, the experience gives kids a boost.

"The most rewarding part has been to see these kids develop basic maintenance skills," said Good. "It's great to see them complete a job and be proud of their accomplishment."

Region One Parks Manager Dave Conklin cites the effectiveness of Good

as program leader and the service the kids provided for users of state-owned sites. "The crew replaced fire grills at Sophie, Tetrault and Glen lakes, all popular fishing spots," said Conklin. "And they removed worn-out facilities

and repaired fences and restrooms at West Shore. At Wayfarers, the kids did something about the weed problem by pulling large amounts of knapweed. To sum it up, I'd say the kids did a superb job."



HARD-WORKING CREW. Doug Good and the Youth Summer Employment Crew worked in state parks, replacing fire grills, repairing fences, pulling knapweed and generally improving the facilities. The cooperative effort teaches students to complete a job and be proud of their accomplishments.

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(continued from Page 1)

cate that, besides being able to support more hunting, the deer in the area prefer natural openings and stands of young timber. However, in areas where natural openings are lacking, cutting units could benefit deer. Morgan has also found that roads do not significantly affect the way deer use the area.

Morgan noted that concentrations of deer on the Tally/Bowser winter range is upwards of 2,000 deer on 10

square miles. "That's a very high density for white-tailed deer even on winter range as compared to other areas," he said. He cautioned that the results of the project must be viewed in light of the series of mild winters northwest Montana has experienced.

Even though final results are not in, Morgan outlined some preliminary guidelines for timber harvest in the area. "I'd recommend a maximum size of 20 acres for clearcuts," he said.

"Also, timber stands next to clearcuts should be grown back to pole stage before the cut is implemented."

Morgan, who recently completed his Doctorate at Montana State University focusing on this project, is optimistic about the results to date.

"The good thing about this project is that it benefits wildlife, timber management and hunter opportunity. As far as I'm concerned, that's a great combination."

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